
Navy Comptroller

Volume XIV



Issue No. II—FY 2002

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Recovery, Restoration, Renewal

Re-establishing Systems in the Navy Budget Office in the Aftermath of 9-11

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Tuesday, 11 September 2001, is a day no one will ever forget. A spectacular act of terrorism shook America, and the world, in ways not seen since the “Day of Infamy” nearly 60 years before. While the world focused on the acts of terror and their immediate repercussions, the Department of the Navy Office of Budget (FMB) faced challenges and struggles far away from the news cameras and discussions dominating the national media.

The Boeing 757 that slammed into the Pentagon at 500 MPH sliced directly underneath the fourth floor offices of FMB and destroyed or gutted the first and second floors in the C, D and E Rings. The jolt on the fourth floor was violent, knocking many people to the floor. A fireball enveloped the offices through the open spaces between rings. The floor in the E Ring immediately buckled; black smoke soon filled the E Ring. Amazingly, the fourth floor did not immediately collapse and all FMB personnel made it safely out of the building. Unfortunately, many of the citizens on the airplane and our co-workers on floors one through three perished.

The black smoke that billowed from the crash site also filled the building, extending into the B Ring where FMB computer servers were located. There was no structural damage in the B Ring; however, all electrical power and network connections were lost. The server room became part of the FBI crime scene and was inaccessible to all personnel. All computer infrastructure (desktop computers, printers, networks) were lost or inaccessible. In effect, the second most important part of the budget formulation system was lost (second only to the people who develop the estimates and make the decisions).

Prior to the attack, the controls for the FY 2003 budget submission to the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) were two days from being finalized. The priorities of the nation immediately changed and DoD began to re-cast the FY 2003 budget to address these changes. It was obvious to senior leadership that our dependence on computers and networks to support this process mandated that systems be recovered as soon as possible. The day after the attack, as senior leadership began to examine budget priorities, numerous people began the process of reconstituting the budget systems used throughout the Navy Financial Management community to prepare, produce, and monitor budget data.

Immediate efforts were initiated to recreate the servers and infrastructure necessary for supporting the process.

- Mr. Dave Burriss (the Navy Headquarters Budgeting System (NHBS) manager) began to locate backup data. Standard FMB procedures required that a copy of weekly data backups be stored offsite every Tuesday morning. Early on Tuesday, 11 September, Ms. Ruby Anderson (a SPAWAR employee) made the required backup copy and walked it to another section of the Pentagon.
- The Assistant for Administration, Office of Under Secretary of the Navy (AAUSN) provided space at the Washington Navy Yard (WNY) to locate new servers. Office space in Crystal City was designated to house the approximately 125-person FMB staff.
- Simultaneously, EDS (the Prime NMCI contractor) assigned people to directly assist FMB with the recovery of servers and infrastructure. Ms. Beth Wisneski of EDS worked with Mr. Burriss to identify specifications for new server hardware and software licenses. Ms. Margaret Davis (also of EDS) began to assist FMB in rebuilding office infrastructure in NC2

Every vendor and every Government agency who could help with the recovery did so with a spirit of patriotism and enthusiasm never seen before.

On Friday, 14 September (three days after the attack) six new servers were delivered to the WNY by EDS. On Monday, 17 September, the Navy Budget Tracking System (NBTS) was available on a limited basis to FMB personnel. Data was restored to its position as of the day before the attack (thanks to the timing of the offsite storage). The NBTS database was the most critical system required to support the formulation of the budget and it was ready for use within a week of the attack. By Monday, 17 September, the infrastructure in the new office space was functional and routine office functions were restored. On 18 September, FMB began to internally use NBTS for budget formulation and execution. This quick recovery is testimony to the dedication and long hours spent at work by the scores of people involved. This included telephone technicians, building engineers, network designers, computer technicians, and others who ensured that servers and infrastructure were wired and ready for service. This recovery was a matter of pride.

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This quick recovery is not the end of the story. Even though the most critical systems had been restored, there were still several weeks of painstaking effort required to reconstruct all Web sites and historical databases. On Saturday, 29 September, FMB people were first allowed entry into the server room escorted by Military Police. The equipment in the room was covered with a layer of thick black soot, but fortunately, there was no water damage. Using flashlights, three people were able to retrieve five servers from the windowless room and carry the servers down three flights of stairs. This allowed for the restoration of additional Web and database services for which no offsite backup existed (mostly static data and systems still under development). Within four weeks of the attack, the remaining services were restored and functional. On 25 October, the systems were used to re-work the FY 2003 budget for submission to OSD.

Eventually, all FMB personnel were allowed back into the standing portion of the fourth floor office space to retrieve work items and personal effects. Upon returning to familiar spaces, everyone paused. The devastation evoked an emotional response from each person. To reach the spaces, you had to walk through standing water on the first floor corridors. The first and second floors and the E Ring were extensively damaged. Our work spaces were black with soot, windows were broken, and the ceilings were collapsed.

On 9 October, Pres Lapada, Carla Coates, and Dennis Kelley made the final trip into the B Ring server room to retrieve the two remaining servers and the archived paper copies of budget material (some archives are dated in the 1950s). The adjacent photograph is of Pres Lapada wearing his "moon suit." The special suit was required for recovery operations.



Pres Lapada wearing a "Moon Suit."

The upheaval caused by the attack was mostly taken in stride by FMB personnel. We did what was required to continue doing our jobs. The common violent experience and subsequent counseling drew us together as a cohesive group with a common purpose. The stand up of new systems was a truly remarkable and gratifying experience for all who were involved. §



Three recovery team members

(Left to right) **Dennis Kelly, Dave Burriss, and Pres Lapada**